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Canberra: Capitol of Australia I

Lead: With the coming of the Australian Federation in 1901, the new constitution required the establishment of a capitol. Not Sydney, not Melbourne, but an entirely new seat of government.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Prior to 1900 the continent of Australia was divided between six separate European colonies: New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia and Southern Australia. In the debates leading to Federation,

regional rivalries were so intense, particularly between Sydney and Melbourne, that the price for agreement was a new capitol, in New South Wales, but at least 100 miles from Sydney.

Professor Geoffrey Hawker, Macquarie University, Sydney: “The constitution also provides that until the federation capitol is established Parliament will meet in Melbourne...so that was there in '27 when the Parliament moved to Canberra...there was pressure to get out of Canberra, there was terrific countervailing pressure not to get out of Melbourne – very comfortable, the heads of the departments are there, the prospect where it arises of moving

to the dust bowl of the newly established Canberra...was bitterly resisted.

Forty districts were considered seeking adequate water supply, moderate climate and topography ideal for a 'garden city.' In 1908 a site was chosen on the limestone plains at the base of Black Mountain about 100 miles southwest of Sydney. It was called by indigenous people, "a meeting place," using the Aboriginal word, Kamberra. Three years later an international competition selected a designer and the new capitol began to take shape. Next: The Praire School comes to Australia.

At the University of Richmond,

this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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<http://www.tomw.net.au/cnbst1.html>

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